COVID-19 Winter Update: What Transplant Recipients Need to Know

Hosted by
Blood & Marrow Transplant Information Network

November 10, 2020, 1 pm Eastern, 12 pm Central, 10 am Pacific
COVID-19 & Transplant

Alyssa R. Letourneau MD, MPH
Areej El-Jawahri MD
Massachusetts General Hospital
Outline

• What is COVID-19?

• How does COVID-19 spread?

• How to protect yourself against COVID-19

• Is it safe to have a transplant during COVID-19 pandemic?

• Contact with people who have had COVID

• Treatments and vaccines for COVID-19
What is COVID-19?

• Novel virus: member of the coronaviruses
• First documented outbreak in Wuhan, China
• Average time to showing symptoms is 4-5 days, but range 1-14 days
• As of 11/2/2020: 9,105,230 cases US, 229,932 deaths
• Across the world: 45,942,902 cases, 1,192,644 deaths
What is COVID-19?

• In adults: 80.9% cases are mild, 13.8% severe, 4.7% critical

• Children can have mild symptoms or be asymptomatic (15-35%)

• Severe disease in children < 3% of cases, mostly due to underlying medical conditions, or infants

• 15-25% of patients require hospitalization and potentially ICU-level of care

• People who are asymptomatic can still spread the virus – not main cause of spread
How does COVID-19 spread?

• Primarily transmitted between people who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet)

• It primarily spreads through respiratory droplet or small particles when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or breathes
How does COVID-19 spread?

• Droplets can also land on surfaces/objects and be transferred by touch, but this is not the main way of spread

• COVID-19 can be stable up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel. On cardboard < 24 hours

• Some evidence that some droplets can stay suspended and can be a source of infection
How to protect yourself and others?

• Wear a mask in public settings!! Regular masks are fine

• Wash your hands often: soap & water at least 20 seconds, especially if you have been in a public area.

• If no soap and water, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
How to protect yourself and others?

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth

• Avoid close contact, maintain 6 feet between people

• Always cover your mouth and nose with tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then wash your hands

• Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily
How to protect yourself and others?

• Stay home as much as possible
• Okay to walk outside, stay 6 feet away from others
• Cancel all travel
• Be careful around the holidays
The public health problem

- Social responsibility
- Importance of social distancing even if you are low risk
- You can save lives

[FLATTENING THE CURVE chart]

SOURCE: CDC, THE ECONOMIST, @CT_BERGSTROM
Is it safe to have a transplant during COVID-19?

• Most people who need a transplant cannot afford to wait

• Hospitals taking a lot of extra precautions to keep transplant floors safe

• Talk to your doctor – if you think your transplant can be delayed

• In some ways, we are seeing less colds/infections in our transplant recipients because everyone is wearing masks!

• So general answer: yes, it is safe to have a transplant during COVID-19, but talk to your doctor about balancing risks and benefits
How risky is COVID-19 in transplant recipients?

- Limited data thus far, largest study from Spain 113 patients
- 88% transplant recipients are hospitalized with COVID-19
- 21% severe illness, 6% ICU level of care, 22% died
- Most of these patients were on immunosuppression (corticosteroids, tacrolimus, sirolimus, etc.)
- Other studies have suggested higher risk of COVID-19 in patients with blood cancers
- Patients who are > 2 years out from transplant and off immunosuppression are likely similar risk to general population
Contact with people who have had COVID-19

• It is safe for people who had mild-moderate COVID-19 to be around others after:

  – 10 days since symptoms first appeared and

  – 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and

  – Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving

• Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery

• Most people do not require testing to be around others
Contact with people who have had COVID-19

• If someone was severely ill with COVID-19, or was immunocompromised when they got COVID:
  – May need to avoid contact for up to 20 days after symptoms
  – Immunocompromised may need testing to determine if it is safe for them to be around others
  – Talk to your doctors about these scenarios

• If you do have contact with someone who had COVID-19
  – Stay home for 14 days after your last exposure!
Available Treatments for COVID-19

• Supportive care to help relieve symptoms. People with mild symptoms can recover at home

• Remdesivir – approved for COVID-19 requiring hospital stay

• Dexamethasone: decrease risk of dying in hospitalized patients with COVID-19 on oxygen
Treatments for COVID-19 Under Investigation

- Monoclonal antibodies: may decrease hospitalizations

- Convalescent plasma (antibodies from people who recovered from COVID-19): ? May reduce risk of dying

- Data do not support hydroxychloroquine or azithromycin for COVID-19 prevention or treatment
What about COVID-19 vaccines?

• Four clinical trials investigating vaccines available in the United States

• Several additional vaccines in phase 3 trials around the world

• Most trials with inactivated vaccines that are theoretically safe for transplant recipients

• If you are > 2 years after transplant with no graft-versus-host disease and off immunosuppression → vaccine will likely be safe

• If you are on immunosuppression, talk to your doctor, vaccine will still likely be safe, but helpful to have more data depending on which vaccine is approved first.
Resources


• How to protect yourself from the CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html